

## GRANDVIEW

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# Open house welcomes residents to the 'Yard'

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The first phase of the Grandview Yard project was on view Sept. 1 with a community open house allowing visitors to take a good long look.

Grandview Yard is expected to be developed over the next 10 to 15 years on 90 acres comprising the former Big Bear warehouse site and surrounding properties. Once completed, the Yard will have 1.5-2 million square feet of commercial and retail space.

The first phase includes a three-story, 92,000 square-foot office building anchored by M+A Architects on the third floor and Jason's Deli on the first floor.

Jason's Deli is scheduled to open Sept. 13 and M+A is expected to

move into the building later in the month.

A two-story, 42,000 square-foot Urban Active Fitness center and a six-story Hyatt Place Hotel with 126 guest rooms opened for business on Sept. 1.

Last week's open house began with a performance by the Grandview Heights High School marching band and remarks by Brian Ellis, president and COO of Nationwide Realty Investors, the project's developer. Ellis also answered questions from the large crowd that attended the event.

It's to their credit that when the Big Bear warehouse



By Lorrie Cecil/ThisWeek

Yard tenants Urban Active, Hyatt Hotel and Jason's Deli participated in the event.



By Lorrie Cecil/ThisWeek

Grandview Heights High School freshman Cathleen Gleason plays the flute, joining the rest of the Grandview Heights High School marching band. Visitors were able to take tours of the new Hyatt Place Hotel, Jason's Deli and Urban Active.



Nationwide Realty Investors president and COO Brian Ellis speaks to the crowd gathered during a community house for the first phase of the Grandview Yard development on Sept. 1.

closed on what is now the Yard's site early in 2004, Grandview Heights city officials had a vision that out of that negative, something special could be created, Ellis said.

When NRI got involved in 2006, the concept was for a retail shopping center, he said.

"But we knew what the community wanted and what we do best—a large scale mixed use project," Ellis said.

Construction of the first phase began less than one year ago, he said.

"Our team set a goal to be done before OSU played its first football game," Ellis said. "That's a significant event everyone pays attention to."

OSU football and other university events will be a market the Hyatt Place hotel will serve, he noted.

The Hyatt Place is a select service hotel and the Yard hotel includes a number of features that are an upgrade of the typical Hyatt Place design. Among them: a larger meeting space and balconies that overlook what will be the first of several public urban parks that will be created

throughout the Yard, Ellis said.

The parks will all be centered around Yard Street, the development's three-quarter mile main street, he said.

In addition to Jason's Deli, the Buckeye Hall of Fame Grill will be opening in November at the office building, Ellis said.

Early next year, Grandview resident Dr. Sharon Schindler will move her aesthetic dentistry practice into a space just off the lobby of the office building, he said.

Urban Active has already exceeded its membership projection, Ellis said.

The fitness center will be an amenity for people who live and work in the Yard and for guests staying at the hotel, he said.

NRI has learned a lot from its development of the Arena District, Ellis said, and while some of what worked there will be applied to the Yard, the Grandview project will be different, with a significant retail base.

When it's completed, the Yard will "have significant activity 365 days a year," he said.

The next phase of the project is expected to be residential, probably starting with apartments for rent before building condomini-



Dominic Parini, 3, left, and his brother, Luca, 14 months, put on fire helmets with the help of their parents Annina and Greg. The fire department handed out safety information and helmets during the event.

ums for sale, Ellis said. A major target market for the residential development will be young professionals as well as empty nesters who find urban living appealing.

The Yard's development will be "a series of phases," that will ultimately be market driven, he said.

"I feel confident there is a demand for residential here," Ellis said.

The retail base of the development will be focused on the northern end of the Yard site, by Third Avenue, he said.

"More than anything, that is market dependent," Ellis said. "We are talking to retailers. They appreciate the location and feel it fits in well with the Columbus market."

"We want Grandview Yard to be the fourth leg of the retail stool" in the Columbus area, he said.

"The economy is really tough right now. Retailers don't have a lot of confidence right now, but long term,



By Lorrie Cecil/ThisWeek

Natalie Lark, 4, gets some snacks at Jason's Deli during the open house.

we feel optimistic we will get there," Ellis said.

A number of improvements are needed to Third Avenue and the railroad bridges to enhance access to the Yard, he said. Preliminary discussions have been held with the city of Columbus regarding how those improvements can be accomplished.

Earlier this summer, Columbus agreed to create a Tax Increment Financing district for the area surrounding the Yard and Nationwide announced it will move 1,400 jobs from Dublin to downtown Columbus.

Connecting Grandview Yard to downtown is a good thing, but it's easier to say than to do, Ellis said.

There is no definite time frame for when the improvements to the railroad bridges can be completed, he said.

"It's expensive to widen them and there is a lot of coordination required with the railroad," Ellis said.

The city of Grandview has autho-

rized the funding of a preliminary engineering study, he said, but NRI's focus is to get the improvements to Third Avenue completed as soon as possible.

The infrastructure work will be designed to improve both vehicular and pedestrian access to the Yard, Ellis said.

Prior to Ellis' remarks, Grandview Mayor Ray DeGraw spoke, calling the Yard a partnership between the cities of Grandview and Columbus, NRI and the Grandview Heights City School District.

What NRI has accomplished with the Yard very few developers could get done, he said.

"What we have here is something even beyond what I could have envisioned," DeGraw said.

NRI has "over-delivered on what they promised," he said. ■



By Lorrie Cecil/ThisWeek

Mayor Ray DeGraw addresses the crowd gathered for the Grandview Yard community open house.